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Board of Supervisors Guarantees Millions for Affordable Housing for Veterans and other Special Populations

The dissolution of redevelopment agencies throughout the state has resulted in an alarming retreat from funding commitments for low- and moderate-income housing. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, however, continues to ensure the development of affordable housing—in particular for veterans, homeless people and other special needs populations.

At its meeting Tuesday, the Board took an uncharted pathway to move forward six housing developments for mentally ill and homeless people, and homeless and mentally ill veterans, developmentally disabled people, and seniors living with HIV/AIDS.

On a motion brought by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina, the Board unanimously voted to release \$13.5 million of tax increment monies the County received from the City of Industry. The money will go to developments that were in limbo after redevelopment agencies were forced by the state to shut their doors. The Board guaranteed that same amount from the general fund, should state and local oversight entities decide to block transmittal of the City of Industry monies for the projects. The move sets 267 housing units on the road to completion.

The County does not expect to have to use its general fund monies, but the guarantee was essential. It enables developers of the projects to meet a March 22 deadline to apply for state tax credits that will fill funding gaps in their projects.

Dozens of veterans turned out to support the motion and cheered its passage.

Juventino “J.” Gomez, mayor pro tem of El Monte told the Board that as a disabled veteran and father of veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, he is grateful they had a home to return to. Thousands of men and women, however, return from deployments with psychological problems and no where to go, he said.

“I just encourage this board to continue to support these men and women—our American soldiers,” Gomez said.

One project that will benefit from the Supervisors’ action is an affordable housing development in South Los Angeles operated by the non-profit organization A Community of Friends. The agency will receive \$1.5 million to rehabilitate 48 units for people with mental illnesses.

“All members of our community – especially those with mental illnesses – are entitled to high quality and environmentally efficient housing,” said Dora Leong Gallo, chief executive officer of A Community of Friends. “It is the basic right to housing that is most critical in allowing the most sensitive members of our communities to not only rehabilitate, but to thrive”.

“We have an obligation to see these projects through,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “We have funds from the City of Industry that were designated for this specific purpose, and today we have put them to their highest and best use.”

In a related matter, the Board also allocated \$5.8 million for a new 72-unit housing development; Terracina Apartments on West Imperial Highway in the unincorporated area of Athens.

The loan, which is administered by the Community Development Commission to fund construction of the project, permits AMCAL, the developer of the Terracina Apartments, to go to the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (CTCAC) to apply for a \$8.68 million tax credit to bridge its remaining funding gap for the \$24.2 million development.

“Our strong partnership with L.A. County was essential in moving this development forward during these difficult economic times,” said AMCAL President Arjun Nagarkatti. “Our goal is to build attractive, new housing to spark more investment in the neighborhood, and the families will be empowered to improve their lives and create a stronger community.”

Once fully funded, AMCAL can begin construction. The complex will include multi-family dwellings, a social service office, a community room and a recreation area for

children to play. AMCAL will collaborate with nonprofit groups LifeSteps and United Friends of the Children, to provide health, mental health, substance abuse, and case management services on-site for residents.

“Despite the dissolution of redevelopment agencies throughout the state, the Board remains steadfast in bringing affordable housing complexes to the County of Los Angeles,” the Supervisor said. “This project is one example of our commitment.”

As part of the loan agreement for construction of the Terracina Apartments, each unit will be affordable to low-income households earning no more than 50% of the median income for the Los Angeles Metropolitan area. In addition, 15 units will be reserved for young adults who have recently transitioned out of the foster care system.

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